AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE Corporation of BRISTOL,

In Execution of the

Act of Parliament

FOR

The better Employing and Maintaining the Poor of that City.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND HONOURABLE, THE *Lords Spiritual and Temporal,* AND Commons in Parliament ASSEMBLED.

May it pleaſe your Honours,

I Humbly make bold to lay before your Honour's an Account of our Proceedings in the City of *Briſtol* on the Act of Parliament for Erecting Hoſpitals and Work-houſes for the better employing and maintaining

the Poor of that City, which paſſed in the firſt Seſſions of the Parliament begun at *Weſtminſter* the 22d of *November* 1695. whereby the Power inveſted in the Corporation commenced from the 12th of *May* 1696.

The firſt thing we did was to chooſe Four Guardians for each of our Twelve Wards, as the Statute does direct, which, with the Mayor and Aldermen, amounted to Sixty Guardians, and made up our Court.

The Court being thus conſtituted, at our firſt Meeting we choſe our Officers appointed by the ſaid Act, *viz.* a Governour, a Deputy-Governour, Twelve Aſſiſtants, a Treaſurer, a Clerk, and a Beadle.

This being done, we ordered the Guardians who dwelt in each Pariſh, to bring in an account of all the Poor in their reſpective Pariſhes, their Names, Ages, Sexes, and Qualifications. Alſo an Account of the Charges expended for maintaining them in each of the laſt three Years, that ſo we might bring it to a *Medium*. We alſo appointed certain ſtanding Rules for the better governing our Debates, and ordered all things done in the Court to be fairly enter'd in a Journal.

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We likewiſe conſidered which would be moſt for the Advantage of the Corporation, to build Work-houſes, or to purchaſe ſuch Houſes, which being already built, might be altered and made fit for our purpoſe.

Theſe things ſpent much time, and it was about the Month of *September* before we could ſettle the *Medium* of the Poor's Rates, in order to certifie to the Mayor and Aldermen what Sum was neceſſary to be raiſed on the City for the next Year.

But here we met with an unexpected *Remora*, Mr. *Samuel Wallis* was ſucceeded in his Majoralty by Mr. *J. H.* and this Change made a great Alteration in our Affairs: For whereas the former had given us all the Incouragement we could expect from him, and had done us the honour to be our firſt Governour, the latter reſolved to obſtruct us all he conld. And becauſe the power of raiſing Money was veſted in him and the Aldermen, he abſolutely refuſed to put that Power in Execution.

This, together with his other Endeavours to Brow-beat the Corporation, kept us at a ſtand till *October* (97.) only our Court met, and diſcourſt things,

and we laboured to keep up the Spirits of our Friends, who began to ſink under theſe Diſcouragements, and to deſpair of Succeſs, the Work ſeeming difficult enough in it ſelf; our undertaking being nothing leſs, then to put to work a great Number of People, many of which had been habited to Lazineſs and Beggary; to civilize ſuch as had been bred up in all the Vices that want of Education could expoſe them to; and to clothe, lodge, and feed them well, with the ſame Sum of Money which was diſtributed among them when they begg'd, lay in the Streets, and went almoſt naked.

Yet all this would not have diſcouraged us, could we have prevailed on Mr. Mayor to have joyned with us. We often ſought it, and he as often refuſed us, till his time being expired, his Succeſſor granted our Requeſt; and then, having loſt much time, we were forced to make large ſteps.

The firſt we made was, a Vote to take on us the Care of all the Poor of the City; and as I remember, this Vote paſſed in *October* or *November* 1697. though we had then no Money raiſed, nor could we expect any till after our

Lady-

Lady-day 1698. So that from the paſſing that Vote to this time is about Two Years.

The next ſtep was to appoint a Committee of Twelve to hear the Complaints of the Poor, to relieve them, and ſet them at work; Six whereof were to go out every Month, and to be ſucceeded by Six more, to be choſen by Ballating.

We had formerly obtained from the Mayor and Common-Council, in the Majoralty of Alderman *Wallis*, the Grant of a Work-houſe, which then lay unoccupied, and the Court had appointed a Committee to place as many Girls in it as it would conveniently contain, both as to Lodging and Working. This is that we called the *New Work-houſe.*

But all things having ſtood ſtill ſo long, we reſolved now to loſe no more time; yet we had no Money, nor could we expect any in leſs than Six Months from the Poor's Rates; therefore we re-reſolved to make our ſeveral Loans for Twelve Months without Intereſt to the Corporation on the Credit of their Common Seal; in which Deſign many of the Citizens lent their Aſſiſtance, whereby we became ſoon Maſters of a-

bout Six hundred pounds Stock. Likewiſe our Guardians, who were appointed to pay the Poor in their ſeveral Pariſhes, voluntarily advanced their weekly Payments, till they could be reimburſt by the Treaſurer. The other Stock we employed to furniſh Beds and other Neceſſaries for our Houſe, Clothes and Proviſions for our Children to be taken in, and Materials for their Working.

We had now Two Committees; one for the Poor, the other for the New Work-houſe.

The Committee for the Poor met twice every Week; And in this Committee we proceeded thus;

Firſt, We voted that the Poor of the City ſhould be viſited in their reſpective Pariſhes, and that new Poor's Rates ſhould be made; and accordingly we ordered the Guardians of each Pariſh to bring together the Poor on a certain Day in ſome convenient Place, where the Committee met, and without Partiality endeavoured to provide for every one according to their Wants. We likewiſe took notice of all the young Girls that were on our Poor's Books, and of ſuch whoſe Parents took no due Care of them;

them; and theſe we recommended to the Committee of the New Work-houſe, to be taken in, and employed by them.

Our Poor's Rates we made in this manner: Every One that expected Relief came before us with their whole Families, except ſuch as were impotent and could not come: In our Books we put down the Name of the Man, the Woman, and each Child; together with the Qualifications of all, either as to Age, Health, Civility, *&c.* what each Perſon did or could get by the Week, and in what Employment. We likewiſe ſet down for what Reaſon the Charity was beſtowed, that when that ſhould ceaſe, or we could find out any other way to provide for it, the Charity ſhould likewiſe ceaſe.

Having thus ſeen the ſtate of all our Poor, and provided for them, the Committee ſat twice a Week in the Publick Court, to hear and provide for all caſual Complaints; which we did in this manner; We ordered that the Poor in their reſpective Pariſhes, ſhould firſt apply themſelves to their Guardian or Guardians, who were to relieve them as they ſaw fit, till the next Sitting of the Committee,

mittee, when they were to bring them up with their Complaints, if they were able to come; and this we did, leſt the Committee (three whereof made a *Quorum*) ſhould be deceived; who could not be ſuppoſed to know the ſtate of all the Poor in the City, and by this weans we had the Opinion of the Guardian of each Pariſh; nor could he eaſily deceive us, becauſe he brought the Poor with him, and thereby the Committee became Judges of the Matter laid before them. At theſe Meetings care was taken of the various Caſes and Exegencies which offered, and in all things there was a regard, as much as could be, to put People on living by their own Labours.

To ſuch as were ſick, we gave Warrants to our Phyſician to viſit them; ſuch as wanted the Aſſiſtance of our Surgeons were directed to them, and all were Relieved till they were able to work; by which means the Poor having been well attended, were ſet at work again, who by neglect might with their Families have been chargeable to the Corporation; for ſome we provided Clothes, for others Work; where we found People careful, but wanted a

Stock

Stock to employ themſelves and their Children, we either lent or gave it; where they wanted Houſes, we either paid the Rent, or became Security for it; where we found them oppreſt, we ſtood by them; where Differences aroſe, we endeavoured to compoſe them; ſo that in a little time all the Complaints of the Poor came to this Committee, (which ſaved our Magiſtrates a great deal of trouble) and care was taken that none went away unheard.

The Committee at firſt ſat twice a Week, but now only once in a Fortnight; not that we grew ſlack in the Care of our Poor, but becauſe their Number being ſo much abated by thoſe received into our ſeveral Work-houſes, the Buſineſs does not require their meeting oftner.

The other Committee, (*viz.*) That for the New Work-houſe, having furniſhed it in order to receive in the young Girls, firſt began with ſuch as were recommended to them by the Committee for the Poor; and this Method hath been generally obſerved ever ſince, both by that Committee, and alſo by the Committee ſince choſen for our other Work-houſe; not that either

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of them depends ou the other, but becauſe the firſt application for Relief is made to the Committee for the Poor.

But before we took in the Girls, we firſt conſidered of proper Officers to govern them; and theſe conſiſted of a Maſter, whoſe Buſineſs was to receive in Work, and deliver it out again, and to keep the Accounts of the Houſe, *&c.*

A Miſtreſs, whoſe Buſineſs was to look after the Kitchin and Lodgings, to provide their Meals at ſet times, and other things which related to the Government of the Houſe.

Tutreſſes to teach them to Spin, under each of which we deſigned to put Five and twenty Girls.

A School-Miſtreſs, to teach them to Read.

Servants in the Kitchin, and for waſhing, *&c.* but theſe we ſoon diſcharged, and cauſed our biggeſt Girls to take their Turns every Week.

We alſo appointed an old Man to keep the Door, and to carry forth and fetch in Work, and ſuch kind of Services.

Being thus provided, we received in One hundred Girls, and ſet them to work at Spinning of Worſted Yarn; all which we firſt cauſed to be ſtript by the Miſtreſs, waſhed, and new clothed from Head to Foot; which, together with wholſome Dyet at ſet hours, and good Beds to lye on, ſo incouraged the Children, that they willingly betook themſelves to their work.

We likewiſe provided for them Apparel for *Sundays*; they went to Church every Lord's Day; were taught their Catechiſms at home, and had Prayers twice every Day; we appointed them ſet Hours for working, eating, and playing; and gave them leave to walk on the Hills with their Tutreſſes, when their work was over, and the weather fair; by which means we won them into Civility, and a love to their Labour. But we had a great deal of trouble with their Parents, and thoſe who formerly kept them, who having loſt the ſweetneſs of their Pay, did all they could to ſet both the Children and others againſt us; but this was ſoon over.

Hitherto things anſwered above our Expectations; our Children grew ſober, and worked willingly, but we very much

much queſtioned, whether their Labours at the Rates we were paid, would anſwer the Charge of their Maintenance; and if not, our great doubt was how we might advance it, without prejudicing the Manufactures.

To clear the firſt, we ſuppoſed our ſelves in a fair way, having appointed their Diets to be made up of ſuch Proviſions as were very wholſome, afforded good nouriſhment, and were not coſtly in price, (*viz.*) Beef, Peaſe, Potatoes, Broath, Peaſe-porridge, Milk-porridge, Bread and Cheeſe, good Bear, (ſuch as we drank at our own Tables) Cabage, Carrots, Turnips, *&c.* in which we took the Advice of our Phyſician, and bought the beſt of every ſort. They had three Meals every day, and as I remember, it ſtood us (with Soap to waſh) in about Sixteen pence *per* Week for each of the One hundred Girls. We ſoon found the effect of their Change of Living, Nature being well ſupported, threw out a great deal of foulneſs, ſo that we had generally Twenty down at a time, in the Meaſels, Small-pox, and other Diſtempers; but By the Care of our Phyſician, and the bleſſing of God on his Endeavours, we never buried but Two, though we have had

had ſeldom leſs than One hundred in the Houſe at any time.

Having thus provided for their Dyets, we next appointed their times of working; which in the Summer was Ten hours and a half every Day, and an hour leſs in the Winter; by which means we anſwered the two Objections raiſed againſt the Poor, (*viz.*) That they will not work, and that they ſpend what they get in fine feeding.

But we ſoon found, that the great cauſe of begging did proceed from the low Wages for Labour; for after about Eight Months time, our Children could not get half ſo much as we expended in their Proviſions. The Manufacturers, who employed us, were always complaining the Yarn was ſpun courſe, but would not advance above Eight pence *per* pound for ſpinning, and we muſt either take this, or have no work. On the other ſide, we were labouring to underſtand how we might diſtinguiſh, and put a value on our Work, according to its fineneſs. This we did by the Snap Reel, which when we were Maſters of, the Committee made an Order, That the Maſter ſhould buy

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in a Stock of Wool, and ſpin it up for our own Accounts, and then proceeded to ſet the Price of Spinning by the Snap Reel, wherein we endeavoured to diſcourage courſe work, and to encourage fine, becauſe we ſaw the latter was likely to bring moſt profit, not only to the Poor, but to the Kingdom in general. We likewiſe ordered ſome things to be made of the ſeveral ſorts of Yarn, at the Rates we had ſet them; and on the whole, we found the Commodities made of fine Yarn, though they were much better than thoſe made of courſe, yet ſtood us in little more; becauſe what the one exceeded in the charge of Spinning, was very much made good in abatement of the Quantity uſed. We therefore ſent to the Manufacturers, and ſhewed them what Experiments we had made; but finding them ſtill unwilling to advance above the old Rate, the Committee voted that they would give Employment to all the Poor of the City, who would make application to them, at the Rates we offered to work, and pay them ready Money for their Labour.

We ſoon found we had taken the right courſe, for in a few Weeks we had Sale for our fine Yarn as faſt as we could make it, and they gave us from Eight pence to Two ſhillings *per* pound for ſpinning the ſame Goods, for which a little before they paid but Eight pence, and were very well pleaſed with it, becauſe they were now able to diſtinguiſh between the fine and courſe Yarn, and to apply each ſort to the uſe for which it was moſt proper: Since which they have given us Two ſhillings and ſix pence *per* pound for a great many pounds, and we ſpin ſome worth Three ſhillings and ſix pence *per* pound ſpinning.

By this means we had the pleaſure of ſeeing the Children's Labour advanced, which a little before I came up, amounted to near Six pounds *per* Week, and would have been much more, but that our biggeſt Girls we either ſettle forth, or put in the Ktchin; and thoſe we receive in being generally ſmall, are able to do ltitle for ſome time after.

The encouragement we had received on this beginning, put us on proceeding further: The Court reſolved to purchaſe a great Sugar-Houſe, out of the

Money directed by the Act to be raiſed for building of Work-houſes, and fit it up for receiving in the remainder of the Poor, (*viz.*) ancient People, Boys, and young Children; which was accordingly done, and a Committee was appointed to manage it. This we called the *Mint Workhouſe*, becauſe it had been lately hired by the Lords of the Treaſury for that Uſe.

The Committee began to take in the Boys in *Auguſt* laſt; theſe we clothed, dyeted, and governed, much after the ſame manner as we had done the Girls, but put them on a different Employment, (*viz.*) ſpinning of Cotten Wool, and weaving of Fuſtians: We have now about One hundred of them together, who ſettle well to their work, and every day mend their hands; they get us already Six pounds *per* Week; they are likewiſe taught to Read, and we ſhall hereafter teach them to Write.

We next took in our ancient People; and here we had principally a regard to ſuch as were impotent, and had no Friends to help them, and to ſuch as we could not keep from the lazy Trade of Begging; theſe we clothed as we ſaw they needed, and put on ſuch Employments as were fit for their Ages and Strengths,

Strengths, having our Eyes chiefly on thoſe to which they were bred; we found it difficult at firſt to bend them down to good Orders, but by degrees we have brought them under Government.

Then we called in all the Children that were on our Poor's Books, and put them under Nurſes; thoſe who can ſpeak and go are carried down into the School to learn their *A, B, C, &c.* As they grow up, we ſhall put them into the working Rooms.

The Boys are kept at a diſtance from the ancient People, who do alſo lodge in diſtinct Apartments, the Men in ſeveral Chambers on one Floor, and the Women on another; all do ſomething, though perhaps ſome of their Labours comes to little, yet it keeps them from Idleneſs; Both the Old and Young attend Prayers twice a day, (except the Bedridden, for whom other Care is taken) and go to Church twice on *Sundays.*

We have now three ſtanding Committees, (*viz.*) For the Poor, for the New Work-houſe, and for the Mint Work-houſe: The firſt gives all Directions, and makes all Allowances, for the Poor, without whoſe Order no Guardian can act any

thing conſiderable, except in Caſes of abſolute Neceſſity, which at the next Meeting of the Committee he muſt give an Account of, and deſire their Approbation. The other two Committees have power to act in the Affairs of that Workhouſe for which they are choſen: They receive in both Old and Young; they bind forth Apprentices, Correct, order the Dyet as they pleaſe, overſee the working, ſell the Manufactures when made, order the payment of all Moneys, which cannot be done unleſs the Note be ſign'd by the Chair-man; and generally direct every thing relating to thoſe Houſes.

The Accounts are made up thus: The Treaſurers Account is audited every Year by a Committee choſen for that purpoſe; at which time he is ſucceeded by another Treaſurer, choſen by the Court: The Accounts of the Guardians who pay the Poor in their ſeveral Pariſhes are audited every three Months, by a ſelect Committee choſen likewiſe by the Court, and are then paid by the Treaſurer: The Accounts for each Workhouſe are audited by the reſpective Committee every Month, when the Maſter adjuſts, not only his Account of Caſh, but alſo of each particular *Specie* of Goods he hath under

under his Care, the Ballance whereof is ſtill carried forward to the next, which when allowed of is ſigned by the Chairman: And the Account for each Houſe is ſo ſtated, that it ſhews at one ſight, what the Houſe is indebted; what Debts are outſtanding, and from whom; what Goods remain in the Houſe, and the Quantity of each *Specie*.

At the making up theſe Accounts nothing (unleſs very trivial) is allowed, for which an Order is not produced, or found entered in our Books, ſo that 'tis very difficult to wrong the Corporation of any thing, if any Guardians ſhould endeavour it.

Theſe Committees keep their Journal Books, wherein all they do is fairly tranſcribed, and ſigned by the Chairman.

This is what at preſent occurs to my Memory touching our Work-houſes at *Briſtol*; I have been as brief as the nature of the thing would admit: The Succeſs hath anſwered our Expectation; we are freed from Beggars, our old People are comfortably provided for; our Boys and Girls are educated to Sobriety, and brought up to delight in Labour; our young Children are well lookt after,

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and not ſpoiled by the neglect of ill Nurſes; and the Face of our City is ſo changed already, that we have great reaſon to hope theſe young Plants will produce a vertuous and laborious Generation, with whom Immorality and Prophaneneſs may find little Incouragement; nor does our hopes appear to be groundleſs, for among Three hundred Perſons now under our Charge within Doors, there is neither Curſing nor Swearing, nor prophane Language, to be heard, though many of them were bred up in all manner of Vices, which neither *Bridewell* nor Whippings could fright them from, becauſe, returning to their bad Company for want of Employment, they were rather made worſe then bettered by thoſe Corrections; wherers the Change we have wrought on them is by fair means. We have a *Bridewel*, *Stocks* and *Whipping-Poſt*, always in their ſights, but never had occaſion to make uſe of either.

What is done in that City I humbly hope may be carried on by the ſame ſteps throughout the Kingdom, if the Bill for that purpoſe now depending in Parliament, doth obtain the Sanction to be paſt into an Act. The Poor may be ſet at work, their Wages advanced without danger to

our

our Manufactures, and they thereby enabled to live on their own Labours, whereby the Charge of the Poor's Rates may be ſaved, and a great many worthy Benefactors encouraged to give, when they ſhall ſee their Charity ſo well diſpoſed of. This I have great reaſon to hope, becauſe we have had near One thouſand pounds freely given to us within the compaſs of one Year, and much thereof by Gentlemen who dwelt at a Diſtance from us, only were willing to Encourage a Work they ſaw likely to be carried on, which might be of good Example to the Nation.

I am,

with all dutiful reſpect,

Right Honourable

and Honourable,

Your Honours

moſt obedient Servant

JOHN CARY.